HIGH DENSITY DISCUSSION

JUNE 11, 2012

WHY ARE WE HERE?

- New development applications requesting multi-family development above 100 dwelling units per acre
- Current high density in Norman is 26 dwelling units per acre
- No guidance in NORMAN 2025 Plan
- No specific density limitation in the zoning code except in the Mixed Use Development District which has a density cap of 30 dwelling units per acre
- OU housing needs

NORMAN 2025 LAND USE AND TRANSPORTATION PLAN

- Residential Land Use Demand
  - 77% single family
  - 13% apartments
  - 10% other
- Density projection of about 16 dwelling units per acre (DU/acre) in Plan
- Did not anticipate a change of housing types

RM-6, MEDIUM DENSITY APARTMENT DISTRICT

- Apartment Buildings- 3 story buildings unless additional setbacks
- Front Yard – 25 feet
- Side Yards – 5 feet
- Rear Yard – 20 feet
- Minimum Lot Area – 9,000 Square Feet
- Floor Area Ratio – 0.4
- Total Impervious Area – 65%

R-3, MULTI-FAMILY DWELLING DISTRICT

- Apartment buildings – 3-story buildings only
- Front Yard – 25 feet
- Side Yards – 5 feet
- Rear Yard – 20 feet
- Minimum Lot Area – 9,000 SF + 3,000 SF for 4 or more units
- Floor Area Ratio for Main building – 0.4
- Total Impervious Area – 65%

RO, RESIDENCE-OFFICE DISTRICT

- RM-6 Uses
- Mixed Building
- Front Yard – 10 Feet
- Side Yards – 5 Feet
- Rear Yards – 10 Feet
- Floor Area Ratio depends on the use
- Total impervious area depends on the use
- No limit on height but above 35 feet additional setbacks

OTHER ZONING DISTRICTS

- Mixed Use Buildings are allowed as a Special use in O-1, CO, C-1, C-2 and C-3
- MUD, Mixed Use Development District allows a mixture of residential densities and office and commercial uses
- PUD, Planned Unit Development District can be used to create any combination of uses on a property.

INFILL DEVELOPMENT

- In the urban planning and development industries, infill is the use of vacant land within a built-up area for new construction.
- It focuses on the reuse and repositioning of obsolete or underutilized sites.
- This type of development is essential to renewing blighted neighborhoods and knitting them back together with more prosperous communities.
- Infill buildings are constructed on vacant or underutilized property or between existing buildings.


BOYD ST
MONNETT AVE

INFILL DEVELOPMENT

- Infill development can involve individual lots or complete neighborhoods.
- Characterized by overall residential densities high enough to support improved transportation choices as well as a wider variety of convenience services and amenities.
- Attention to design of infill development is essential to ensure that the new development fits the existing context.

REDEVELOPMENT

- Redevelopment is development that occurs on previously developed land.
- More intensive use of existing underused buildings and sites (often including building additions and floor plan reconfiguration).
- Rehabilitation of historic buildings for new uses.
- Removal of existing building(s) and replacement with different buildings, often which are larger and contain more intensive uses.

WHAT IS DENSITY?

- Density is a number of units—people or dwellings--in a given land area.
- Population density depends on both dwelling unit density and household size. The population density will be lower with small households such as empty nesters than with large families with several children.
- Density varies greatly depending on the base land area used in the density calculation. The parcel or site density is almost always higher than the neighborhood density, because at a neighborhood scale much land is included in the base land area calculation that does not have houses.

Comparison of Density Measures for the Same Location

- Site density 10 DUs per acre
- Block density 8 DUs per acre
- Net neighborhood density 6 DUs per acre
- Gross neighborhood density 5 DUs per acre
- City density 4 DUs per acre
- Metropolitan density 3 DUs per acre


30 units / acre


37 units / acre


70 units / acre

PROS AND CONS OF DENSITY

- It is promoted by those who value urban streetscapes, efficient infrastructure supply, walkable neighborhoods, and increased housing options.
- Increased density is opposed by those who imagine ugly buildings, overshadowed open space, parking problems, and irresponsible residents.

NET AND GROSS DENSITY

- Net density refers to densities where the base land area calculation focuses only on the parcel. It is a units-per-acre density measurement that includes in the calculation only land occupied by residential uses. It does not include streets, parks or other uses.

- Gross densities do not have such exclusions. It is a units-per-acre density measurement that includes in the calculation, land occupied by public rights-of-way, recreational, civic, commercial and other non-residential uses.

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DENSITY VS. CROWDING

- **Crowding** is a perception that there are too many people. However, in housing studies crowding is generally defined as the number of people per room, per bedroom, or square foot. Obviously density and crowding are not the same and are not even related. It is possible to live at very high density in a spacious apartment with no crowding, and conversely it is possible to live in a detached farm house that is crowded in terms of having many people per room.

DENSITY VS. BUILDING TYPE

- Often people **confuse density with building type** and assume, for example, that detached houses are lower density than attached housing types. While this is generally true it is not always the case. A high-rise tower with large units set on a park-like site may be lower density than a set of detached houses on small lots.

PERCEIVED DENSITY

- **Perceived density** is not highly related to actual density but is affected by landscaping, aesthetics, noise, and building type. Often, when people say an area is dense, they base this assessment on a perception that a development is ugly, has little vegetation, and has caused parking problems for neighbors, rather than a count of the actual number of units per acre. Design can make an enormous difference to perceived density.

SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS

- Some people associate higher densities with **social and economic characteristics** such as renter and low-income households, and high crime neighborhoods.
- They may misperceive densities because of this, underestimating the densities of more affluent areas with larger numbers of owners.

OPEN SPACE

- This is the amount of useable open space provided for each of the dwelling units, and includes:
  - landscaped areas,
  - uncovered outdoor activity areas,
  - unenclosed balconies,
  - decks and patio areas,
  - pedestrian ways or plazas designed to be used by the tenants.


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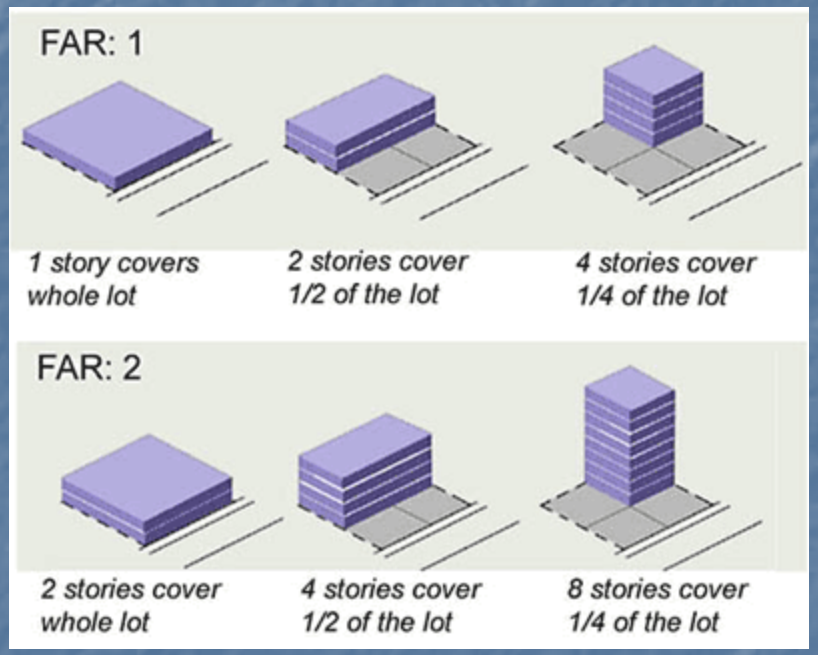
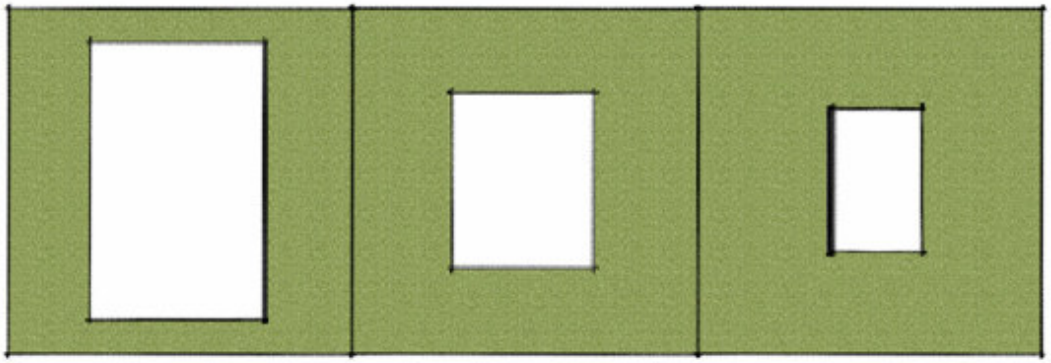
KEBAGER

FLOOR AREA RATIO



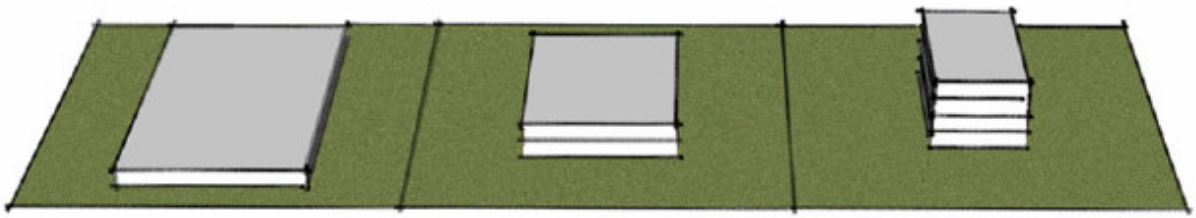
A density measure expressing the ratio between a building's total floor area and its site coverage. To calculate F.A.R., the gross square footage of a building is divided by the total area of its lot. F.A.R. conveys a sense of the bulk or mass of a structure, and is useful in measuring non-residential and mixed-use density.

Site Coverage



40% 20% 10%

Building Height



1-story 2-story 4-story


SUPERDISCOUNT
Collichany
SHOES

SMARTH GROWTH

- **Smart growth** is an urban planning and transportation theory that concentrates growth in compact walkable urban centers to avoid sprawl. It also advocates compact, transit-oriented, walkable, bicycle-friendly land use, including neighborhood schools, complete streets, and mixed-use development with a range of housing choices.
- **Smart growth** goals are to achieve a unique sense of community and place; expand the range of transportation, employment, and housing choices; equitably distribute the costs and benefits of development; preserve and enhance natural and cultural resources; and promote public health.

NEW URBANISM

- **New Urbanism** is an urban design movement which promotes walkable neighborhoods that contain a range of housing and job types. It arose in the United States in the early 1980s, and has gradually continued to reform many aspects of real estate development, urban planning, and municipal land-use strategies.

- New Urbanism is strongly influenced by urban design standards that were prominent until the rise of the automobile in the mid-20th century; it encompasses principles such as traditional neighborhood design (TND) and transit-oriented development (TOD). It is also closely related to regionalism, and the broader concept of smart growth.

CONGRESS FOR NEW URBANISM

- The organizing body for New Urbanism is the Congress for the New Urbanism, founded in 1993. Its foundational text is the *Charter of the New Urbanism*, which says:

  "We advocate the restructuring of public policy and development practices to support the following principles: neighborhoods should be diverse in use and population; communities should be designed for the pedestrian and transit as well as the car; cities and towns should be shaped by physically defined and universally accessible public spaces and community institutions; urban places should be framed by architecture and landscape design that celebrate local history, climate, ecology, and building practice."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MULTIFAMILY HOUSING

- Multifamily housing is defined here as housing that is built for rent or for sale at market prices at densities ranging from ten to 100 or more units per acre.

- The types of dwelling units included range from garden apartments and condominiums with surface or integral garage parking built at ten to 30 units per acre to mid-rise apartment and condominium structures of three to six stories built at 30 to more than 100 units per acre to high-rise apartment and condominium structures of more than six stories built at more than 100 units per acre.

MULTIFAMILY HOUSING

- Multifamily living often is the best or preferred housing solution for many people at different stages in their lives for a variety of reasons.
- It provides an important housing option for young people just starting out in a career or saving to buy a home, as well as for senior citizens who no longer care to maintain a single-family home yet want to remain near their children and grandchildren.
- Indeed, many people, in general, will find that at some point in their lives multifamily housing serves their needs.

MULTIFAMILY AND SMART GROWTH

- Well-planned, higher-density housing has always been an integral component of smart growth.
- Preserve more open space and natural features than with single-family housing developments.
- Reduces development pressure on the remaining undeveloped land.
- Usually requires less public infrastructure, including roads, sewer and water pipes, and electricity and gas lines.
- Makes it financially feasible to integrate commercial and retail uses into a neighborhood.
- Has a smaller per-housing-unit fiscal impact on local governments than single-family homes because it has a smaller impact on local schools.

MULTIFAMILY AND THE ENVIRONMENT

- Multifamily development tends to be more compact than single-family housing development, thereby creating less land disturbance and fewer impervious surfaces.
- Multifamily residents tend to drive fewer miles per unit and also tend to use public transportation more frequently than residents of single-family housing.
- Smaller multifamily units use less electricity and apartment residents in general use less water per unit than single-family homes.
- Multifamily housing creates efficiencies that make it easier and more affordable to pick up trash and recyclables, and to pick up and deliver mail.

MULTIFAMILY HOUSING AND ECONOMIC VITALITY

- Access to a large and diverse labor pool has become the most important factor in making corporate decisions on business locations.
- The number one problem facing the labor pool today is housing affordability.
- Failing to provide a balanced range of attractive housing options makes a region less appealing to businesses while also driving up land and housing prices, thus promoting de facto segregation based on household income and type.
- Where alternatives to expensive single-family homes are not available, many households are forced to move farther away from employment centers to find affordable housing, creating traffic and pollution problems as well as a lower quality of life and a decline in worker morale.
- If the affordable housing situation is bad enough, businesses may be forced to relocate to areas with less expensive housing markets.

MULTIFAMILY HOUSING AND TRAFFIC CONGESTION

- While it may increase traffic at an individual site, multifamily housing can significantly relieve overall regional traffic congestion.
- Multifamily housing allows more people to live in housing they can afford that is near their work.
- Multifamily housing developments that are clustered along transportation corridors make various kinds of mass transportation feasible.
- Multifamily residents average one motor vehicle per household, while owner-occupied households average two vehicles.
- Single-family housing is likely to generate an average of ten auto trips per weekday while apartments generate only seven; high-rise apartments generate even fewer trips, averaging only four trips per day.
- The availability of recreational facilities—including fitness centers, pools, and picnic areas—within the multifamily community reduces the need for auto trips as most residents can walk to these amenities.

MULTIFAMILY HOUSING AND DESIGN

- Multifamily housing has come a long way from the plain brick boxes of the past; the design of today's apartments and condominiums is much more creative and sensitive to neighborhood context.
- Multifamily structures allow greater flexibility in siting buildings, which makes it possible to preserve open space and distinctive natural features of the site such as hillsides, streams, or stands of trees.
- Visual preference surveys have demonstrated that consumers, when shown well-designed visual images of high-density communities and low-density communities, often prefer the high-density communities.
- Many multifamily housing communities were constructed using principles consistent with the new urbanism movement. Multifamily housing has an important role to play in new urbanism communities of the future.
- There is no discernible difference in price appreciation of single-family housing located near multifamily buildings and that of homes not located close to multifamily housing.

SPRAWL

- Sprawl consumes much more land per-capita than traditional urban developments because zoning laws generally require that new developments are of low density. A common example is that of single family homes on large lots, with four or fewer units per net acre. Buildings usually have fewer stories and are spaced farther apart, separated by lawns, landscaping, roads or parking lots. Lot sizes are larger, and because more automobiles are used much more land is designated for parking. The impact of low density development in many communities is that developed or "urbanized" land is increasing at a faster rate than the rate of population.

NEXT STEPS

- Scheduled meetings June, July, August
- Meeting Facilitators for future meetings
- Introduction to topics with breakout sessions
- Wrap-up Session in late August
- Information on the web site regarding meeting dates and meeting content

FUTURE MEETING DATES

- Thursday, June 28, 2012 Norman High School
  - Location and Compatibility
- Monday July 9, 2012 Norman High School
  - Mixed Buildings or Not and Height of Structures
- Thursday July 26, 2012 Norman High School
  - Parking, Traffic and Infrastructure
- Monday August 13, 2012 Norman High School
  - Design Criteria
- Thursday August 30, 2012 Norman High School
  - Wrap-Up Session